

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Up Your Physical Activity Level for a Longer Life and Healthier, Higher Performing Brain

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain healthy lifestyle protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **Today, we look at the how increasing your level of physical activity can promote a longer and healthier life and healthier, higher performing brain.***

Findings from a [recent study](#) suggest that a longer life may mean scheduling in *even more* than the recommended amount of weekly exercise. This also contributes to a healthier, higher performing brain.

The current [physical activity guidelines](#) recommend a minimum of 150-300 minutes per week (min/wk) of moderate physical activity (MPA), 75-150 min/wk of vigorous physical activity (VPA), or an equivalent combination of MPA and VPA. The current guidelines also recommend doing full-body strength-training workouts twice a week.

The recent Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health study, published in American Heart Association's peer-reviewed journal *Circulation*, analyzed 30 years of medical records and mortality data from more than 100,000 adults. Participants self-reported their leisure time activity in questionnaires several times over the course of 30 years, and researchers estimated the association between the time and intensity of exercise with rates of death. Researchers found that people who followed the minimum guidelines for physical activity reduced their risk of early death by as much as 21%. But people who exercised from two to four times the minimum (300-600 min per week) were able to lower their risk by as much as 31%.

"Our study provides evidence to guide individuals to choose the right amount and intensity of physical activity over their lifetime to maintain their overall health," lead researcher Donghoon Lee concludes. "Our findings support the current national physical activity guidelines and further

suggest that the maximum benefits may be achieved by performing medium to high levels of either moderate or vigorous activity or a combination."

Examples of moderate activity include a very brisk walk, mowing the lawn or playing tennis doubles, while vigorous activity includes things like biking, hiking, jogging, swimming, or playing soccer.

You may be thinking, "10 hours a week of moderate activity sounds like a lot. There is no way I can work that in with all my other responsibilities."

You don't have to add it all in at once. Just 11 minutes of exercise a day made a difference in life span according to a [2021 megastudy](#) and brain span according to the BHI. You can make it a brisk walk outside or on the treadmill, do four sets of a three-minute body-weight exercise sequence, practice a yoga flow or pick three upbeat songs to dance to.

So, while the current exercise guidelines are in the right ballpark, doing more weekly activity may provide extra life-extending benefits.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

If you need to be more active, make sure that you are always on the lookout for little ways to move more. Here are some small ways to increase physical activity throughout your day:

- **Get the whole family involved**—enjoy an afternoon bike ride with your kids. Walk up and down the soccer or softball field sidelines while watching the kids play. Walk the dog—don't just watch the dog walk. Clean the house or wash the car.
- **Register for classes or activities offered according to a specific schedule.**
- **Take the stairs instead of the elevator.**
- **Stand instead of sitting (this increases strength, stamina, and attention and focus).**
- **Walk or bike to your destination instead of driving.**
- **Do stretches or ride a stationary bike while watching TV.**
- **Take a 10 minute walk in the morning, at lunch, and/or evening.**
- **Do calf raises while getting ready in front of the bathroom mirror.**
- **Keep hand weights at your desk. Do bicep and tricep exercises while on phone calls.**
- **Turn on the music and dance around the house.**
- **Wear a good quality pedometer and aim for 10,000 steps per day.**

BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:

- Stress resilience
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Social connection
- Emotional well-being

- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative, Inc. (BHI), a 501(c)(3) non-profit, uses a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is building brain healthy communities, cultures that promote brain healthy lifestyles, foster protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes at the individual and community level for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. ***Brain Health Matters and Lifestyle Makes a Difference.***